

### **REMARKS**

In an Official Action dated December 17, 2004, the Examiner indicated that the rejection of claims 17-21 was not addressed in Applicants' Response dated September 7. Accordingly, Applicants request that the Examiner reconsider the rejection of claims 17-21 in light of the following discussion.

In the previous Official Action, dated April 7, 2004, the Examiner indicated that claims 4 and 5 were allowable over the prior art, but objected to claims 4 and 5 as depending from an independent claims that was rejected, namely claim 1. Accordingly, in a Response filed September 7, 2004, the claims were amended so that features of claim 4 were incorporated into claim 1. Accordingly, since the Examiner previously indicated that the subject matter of claim 4 was allowable, Applicants believe that claim 1, as amended is allowable.

Referring now to claims 17-21, independent claims 17 and 18 were previously been amended to incorporate method features such as providing a needle assembly having a hub and automatically releasing the shield and displacing the shield to enclose the sharpened tip of the needle in response to axial displacement of the hub relative to the shield. The Examiner indicated that features similar to these rendered previously pending claim 4 patentably distinct from the prior art. Accordingly, claim 17 is patentably distinct from the prior art of record. Similarly, claim 18, recites the step of axially displacing a hub relative to a shield to automatically release the shield and displacing the shield to enclose the sharpened tip of the needle. This features, in combination with the other features of claim 18 are patentably distinct from the prior art of record for reasons similar to those discussed in connection with claim 17. Accordingly, Applicants request that the Examiner reconsider claim 18 and dependent claims 19-21.

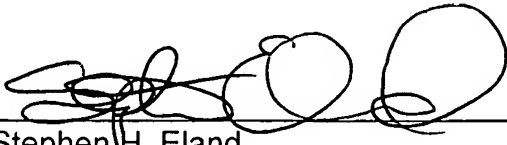
In light of the foregoing discussion, Applicants believe that this application is in form for allowance. If the Examiner believes that there are any issues remaining regarding this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants'

undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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